UNITED
NATIONS

E

Economic and Social Council

Distr.
GENERAL

E/CN.3/1997/26
20 September 1996

ORIGINAL: ENGLISH

STATISTICAL COMMISSION
Twenty-ninth session
10-14 February 1997
Item 14 of the provisional agenda*

WORLD STATISTICS DAY

Note by the Secretary-General

1. At its eighteenth session (New York, 16-19 April 1996), the Statistical Commission's Working Group on International Statistical Programmes and Coordination considered the holding of a world statistics day on the basis of a note by the Secretary-General (E/CN.3/AC.1/1996/R.11) containing the summary results of a survey of countries and the views of the ACC Subcommittee on Statistical Activities on the matter. The Working Group requested the United Nations Statistics Division to revise the note to reflect the range of views expressed during the discussion and submit it to the Commission at its twenty-ninth session (E/CN.3/1997/19, para. 47). In response to that request, a summary of the views expressed during the Working Group's discussion are set out in the annex to the present note; the original note mentioned above is also before the Commission.

2. The ACC Subcommittee on Statistical Activities, at its thirtieth session (New York, 7-9 May 1996) reconfirmed the conclusion that it had reached at its twenty-ninth session, namely that, while it recognized the value of national statistics days in those countries that had them, it had reservations about the potential value of and support for holding a world statistics day, especially in the light of the resources needed and the absence of well-developed objectives (see E/CN.3/1997/21, para. 30).

3. The Commission may wish to decide whether or not to support the holding of a world statistics day. If the Commission decides in favour of holding a world statistics day, it may also wish to outline what activities should be involved

* E/CN.3/1997/1.

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and what the respective roles of the likely participants should be, including countries and international statistical agencies. If the Commission decides against a world statistics day, it may wish to recognize the views expressed in the Working Group by expressing support for the holding of national and regional statistical days in those countries and regions that already hold such days, and by encouraging the holding of national statistical days and the mounting of activities that countries consider appropriate for their own objectives in any countries that might wish to establish such days.

Annex

SUMMARY OF VIEWS EXPRESSED BY THE STATISTICAL COMMISSION'S WORKING GROUP ON INTERNATIONAL STATISTICAL PROGRAMMES AND COORDINATION AT ITS EIGHTEENTH SESSION ON HOLDING A WORLD STATISTICS DAY a/

1. At is eighteenth session, the Statistical Commission's Working Group on International Statistical Programmes and Coordination considered the possible holding of a world statistics day. Two widely differing views were expressed by members. Two countries expressed support for holding a world statistics day, referring to the results of the survey of countries that had been conducted by the United Nations Statistics Division, while six countries were opposed, sceptical or neutral, and also found support for their view in the survey of countries. One observer supported a world statistics day, and the International Statistical Institute indicated that it would canvas the views of its members at its next Council meeting and report its findings to the Commission.

2. Several reasons were suggested for holding a national, regional and world statistics day, including:

(a) To promote people's awareness of statistics and their value, and encourage their support for statistics and for providing data;

(b) To bring together users and producers of statistics;

(c) To promote the use of statistics;

(d) To improve relationships between statistical authorities and the media.

3. On the other hand, several reasons were suggested for not holding a world statistics day, including:

(a) Concern that the actual celebration of such a day, in part due to cultural differences, might be limited to such an extent that the event would not be successful;

(b) Concern that while other special days were celebrated to a larger or lesser degree around the world, it was difficult to establish what their benefits were.

4. It was noted that additional reasons for holding or not holding a world statistics day were contained in the summary of national replies concerning world statistics day (E/CN.3/AC.1/1996/R.11, annex).

5. A common view shared by all the participants was that if a world statistics day were to be established, countries themselves should choose whether to undertake any activities, and should choose the activities that were appropriate for their circumstances. The following views were expressed by one or two participants: (a) some countries would support a world statistics day and

others would not; (b) cultural differences would influence both countries' decisions on the level of support for such a day worldwide and their choice of activities; and (c) United Nations bodies should undertake some activities related to such a day if it were established.

Notes

a/ The full text of statements made by participants in the discussion will be before the Commission as a background document.